

Testimony of Melissa Robinson
Family School Connection Program
Bielefield Elementary School
70 Maynard St
Middletown, CT 06457

Public Hearing – February 22, 2013

My name is Melissa Robinson and I appreciate you taking the time to listen to my plea to you to **save the Family School Connection Program**, a research based program funded by the Children's Trust Fund. I am not only the Clinical Supervisor of the Family School Connection Program in Middletown at Bielefield Elementary School, but I am also a constituent in that district, and a mother who has a strong interest in assuring that all of our children are given the opportunity and resources to be successful. With that said, the proposal to eliminate funding for the Family School Connection Program would be a huge detriment to the State of Connecticut.

The Family School Connection Program is available to elementary school children in 4 different communities. We provide weekly home visitation and support to families who have had issues with attendance and tardiness; academic or behavioral concerns; and other issues that are affecting children's academic performance. We are literally the bridge that connects families to the school. One teacher in the school recently said: "I can only connect with so many students during the day. Family School Connection brings that connection into the home with the student so we can affect the whole child. They provide parents and children with resources that allow the child to come to school ready to learn." As a school, we are working to meet the needs of an increasingly vulnerable population and now more than ever we need to support our children so they succeed in school and therefore have a much higher chance of becoming productive members of society.

Since the program's inception in 2009, the Middletown Family School Connection Program has helped 73 families which includes 287 individuals. We work with families to increase access to community resources; strengthen communication between families and school; support involvement in their child's education; promote positive parenting skills and foster parent and family engagement in the school. One mother recently stated that: "if I didn't get involved in Family School Connection Program, I don't know where my son would be now. Before the program he was a huge behavior and discipline problem in school and home and I just didn't know how to handle him. Because of this, he wasn't learning and his test scores were extremely low. My home visitor gave me the tools to help me how to support my son. He has completely changed, is now in Middle School, and is doing well in his classes and at home."

The research says that the more a parent is involved in their child's education, the higher their grades and graduation rates are. So if you are interested in closing the achievement gap and we know that parent involvement in schooling is helping children to be more successful academically, then let us continue to help give parents the tools they need to help their children. Again, please do not support the Governor's plan to eliminate the funds for the Family School Connection Program.